



A Boarding School at Work.

Our North India Missions.

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OUR North India Missions are confined to four well-marked and differing districts, comprising, first, South Calcutta, with its village work stretching thirty miles South East ; secondly, the rural district of Moorshedabad, with a population half Hindu and half Moslem ; thirdly, a district including Mirzapore and a share of Benares, the " Home Counties " of Hinduism ; and, fourthly, the mountain city of Almora, with its surrounding villages. As to language, the first two are Bengali, and the last two are Hindi with a large infusion of Urdu.

The work was commenced by Nathaniel Forsyth, in 1798, who took up his residence in the Dutch town of Chinsurah, a few miles from the Danish town of Serampore, where, shortly after, Carey, Marshman and Ward found refuge. The chief feature of the Chinsurah Mission was a large circle of boys' schools, which were used as centres of evangelistic work. In 1816, when the English Government had overruled the timid and abject exclusiveness of the East India Company, the expansion of the Mission in North India was commenced by Townley, Keith and others, with Calcutta as a base. An English Church was founded, in a broad spirit, and called Union Chapel. It was there that ninety years ago the Bengal Auxiliary Society was established, which, with the financial assistance of the London Board, proceeded in a few years to open stations in Berhampore, Benares, Mirzapore and Almora. In course of time, and for natural reasons of distance and language, the last three became independent.

It may be important to note that it was not till the twenty-sixth year of the North India Mission that the first convert, Ram Hari, was baptised. But three years later Ramji and two companions from Rammakhalchok, eight miles south of Calcutta, arrested by the preaching of Mr. Trawin near Kalighat temple, accepted Christ, and destroying their Siva temple, erected a church with its materials. This was followed by a wonderful revival in the rice-villages, and for seven jubilant years the missionary spirit was manifested amongst these rustic people and hundreds were received into the kingdom of Christ. From 1831 for about twenty-five years a Laodicean period of jealousy, strife and discouragement showed itself, with which the small and decreasing staff of missionaries was unable to cope. About 1860 an improvement followed in the establishment at Kaurapukur as a central church, with its succession of Brahmin missionary superintendents of the whole district.

In Moorshedabad rural stations have been added, at Jiaganj, Jungipore and Beldanga. In the Benares district important work has been carried on in Mangari, and in Dudhi in the forest south of the Sone, a tributary of the Ganges. In the Mirzapore district there are Kachwa, with its out-stations, and Gopigunge. From Almora the Gospel has been preached not only in the surrounding villages, but also amongst the Bhotiyas in the snow passes of the Himalaya, on the borders of Thibet.

HIGHER EDUCATION.

In 1836, the suburb of Bhowanipore was made the head-centre of the Calcutta Mission. The Anglo-Vernacular Boys' School in its new quarters was developed on the system so successfully inaugurated in the Church of Scotland Mission, by which the Gospel was taught to the higher castes who had hitherto kept aloof from bazaar preaching and other evangelistic methods. The blessing of God was abundantly vouchsafed at Bhowanipore, and many conversions of Brahmins and others followed. The large and commodious Institution building was erected in 1851, at a cost of about £7,000, and a college department and a higher-grade theological class were opened. The result is seen in the able pastors of the Bhowanipore Bengali Congregational Church and the superintending pastors at Kaurapukur. Others have done excellent work in the Moorshedabad district and in the small Rural Missions of Baduria, Godurbanga and Joynagar. One was the pastor of the Benares Hindustani Church for many years. Two of their number visited England, and in their deputation work gave many churches the opportunity of testing the quality of the Indian Ministry.

This call for colleges and high schools has been felt and most ably supplied in Berhampore, Benares, Mirzapore and Almora, where the process of leavening the caste Hindus with the principles of the teaching of Jesus is perseveringly maintained.

WORK AMONGST WOMEN AND GIRLS.

The education of Indian Christian girls was taken in hand in all the stations almost from the beginning. The instruction was in the vernacular for many years. Mrs. Ashton, in Bhowanipore, was the first to give them an English education, in 1868, though adequate premises were not erected till 1881. The importance of higher education for Indian girls is now recognised in all the districts. Especial reference may be made to the premises erected in Mirzapore by Mrs. Mather and Mrs. Hewlett,

and by Miss Budden in Almora. In the last-mentioned the standard has been considerably raised, as well as in Bhowanipore, where an United Training College has been opened for Indian female teachers. The Indian Christian girls have taken the lead in education, and it is desirable they should maintain that position, for the Hindu and Moslem communities have become alive to the need of instruction that the Indian wife may be a helpmeet to her highly-educated husband. The Moslems are even about to establish a carefully-guarded boarding school for girls, alongside of the famous Mahomedan College, at Alighar, the centre of the Moslem movement for reform.

Zenana work in India owes its origin to three lady pioneers in Calcutta, the best-known of whom was Mrs. Mullens, of Bhowanipore, but after her premature death it had to be carried on by voluntary workers until lady missionaries were sent out. The system had enormously developed all over India, and the L.M.S. North Indian stations have all done their part. Along with this new form of work, schools for Hindu and Moslem girls were opened. It is the uniform testimony of the ladies that though the children are removed too early from school they carry the influence of their Gospel teaching and Christian hymns into the Zenana, and they themselves as they grow up become more amenable to Bible instruction and, whether visited or not, are gradually breaking down many of the superstitions and prejudices which have been a great hindrance to the progress of the Gospel.

MEDICAL WORK.

The Society has two flourishing hospitals in North India, one conducted by Drs. Ashton and Evans, at Kachwa, twenty miles from Benares, which is proving to be an admirable means of evangelisation, and with its four branch dispensaries is linked on with Benares, Mangari, Gopigunge and Mirzapore in an important chain of stations. The other is a women's hospital at Jiagunge, near Moorshedabad, conducted by two lady doctors, Mrs. Joyce and Miss Hawker. Almora is noted for its large leper asylum, and Dr. Shepherd has a separate hospital for Indian women.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.

Looking forward to the future the most important recent movements are found in the admittance of Indian missionaries into the District Committees, thus giving the Indian Christian Community representatives on the controlling executive bodies. Also there is the formation of Local Missionary Auxiliaries or Christian "Anjumans" in the Bhowanipore, Berhampore and Kachwa Districts. Moreover, there is the formation of self-governing Pastorates at Benares and Almora, as well as in Bhowanipore.

1910 saw an advance in the constitution of Kaurapukur as a Head-Station with new buildings for an all-round Mission, comprising four English Missionaries, two male and two female, in addition to the long established Indian Pastorate, Boys' and Girls' School, and an Industrial Department. The same year was marked by the inauguration of a Christian University at Serampore, with an interdenominational staff of 10 English and 2 Indian Theological Professors and a Christian Hostel.

CONCLUSION.

With 650,000 Mahomedans in Moorshedabad and 40,000 in Benares, where there are said to be 300 mosques, and with large numbers in other

districts, it can scarcely be said that the L.M.S. is giving adequate attention to Islam, yet each station does what it can, in the absence of trained specialists, to draw the Moslems to Christ.

The Mission has laboured long and perseveringly, and much direct and indirect fruit has resulted. There are not wanting indications that are hopeful, and in the new era which is dawning the opportunities for growth seem likely to increase. The spirit of progress and reform is showing itself in every section of Indian society. Even the "untouchable" outcasts begin to see opportunities to rise in the scale of both liberty and civilisation, and in some cases, as at Joynagar, near Calcutta, are seeking the advice of Indian as well as English missionaries. Educated and uneducated alike are prepared to listen more appreciatively to Christian teaching. Others are struggling to reform Hinduism and Islam, and bring them more into line with modern thought, though some are more hostile in attitude and show a reactionary spirit. The Arya Samaj is an example of the latter, and perhaps also the Mahomedan Anjuman Societies.

The feeling of the importance of religious instruction in the education of the country is shown in the proposal to make the Benares Hindu College a Hindu University, and to form a Mahomedan University at Aligarh. There are also movements to form clubs for Zenana women, and the last two years have been noted for orthodox Indian ladies holding meetings for women. They have also been advocating marriage reform and other social improvements on the public platform of the National Social Congress. At the same time, Indians are being more and more widely entrusted with administrative, legislative and municipal duties, in which also Indian Christians are having their share. These and other signs of awakening activity are a call for Missionary sympathy, and show that this is the time to strengthen our stations and to unite in fervent prayer for renewed enthusiasm and widespread revival of spiritual life, so that new forces may be developed within the Indian churches, which shall spend themselves in wider Kingdom and in a the churches themselves, clearer and more extension of Christ's deeper religious life in themselves, resulting in a effective manifestation of His teaching among every section of the Indian communities of North India.

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